(c) The reasons for lower production and slower growth in agriculture during 1997-98 arc attributed to deficient rainfall in the central parts of the country and frequent heavy rains in November and December, 1997, thus delaying the sowing process of rabi crops in most parts of the country.

(d) To accelerate the growth in agriculture sector, the Government is implementing various crop-specific development programmes relating to cereals, pulses, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane, jute and horticulture crops. Besides, the Government is providing price and market support to the farmers as well as expanding the network of irrigation facilities to more areas etc.

Production of Shrimp

899. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the annual production of shrimp during the last three years;

(b) whether there has been a sharp decline in the production of shrimp in the country every year for the last;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) the steps taken to increase the production of shrimps with the increase in demand of shrimp in the international market; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICUTLURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) The annual production of shrimp during 1994-95 to 1996-97 is given below:

Year	Shrimp Production ('000 tonnes)
1994-95	360
1995-96	331
1996-97	361 (Provisional)

(b) and (c) There has been no sharp decline in the shrimp production during the above period. However, the decline in production during 1995-96 is attributed to White Spot viral disease in isolated pockets and declaration of crop holiday for four months due to the occurrence of disease.

(d) and (e) The steps taken by the Government for increasing the production of shrimp *inter alia* include:—

(i) development of scientific shrimp farming through Brackishwater Fish Farmers Development Agencies and providing package of technical, financial and extension support to shrimp growers;

(ii) encouraging establishment of integrated shrimp farms and support facilities such as seed hatcheries, feed mill, etc. in the Government/ public/private sectors.

(iii) human resource development by establishing demonstration-cum-training centres; and

(iv) issue of guidelines outlining measures for development and management of sustainable brackishwater aquaculture practices, etc.

Decline in cotton production

900. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the production of cotton has declined heavily during the last four years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, year-wise and State-wise;

(c) what are the reasons for the decline in the production thereof; and

(d) what steps Government have taken to save the cotton-seeds from infestation insects therein, together with the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The production of cotton in the country has been consistently rising during 1994-95 to 1996-